RAILWAY JOTTINGS.

Our old friend the flagstaff, string, and pulley signal, has started up again as fresh as ever, not one whit the worse of wear, though clad in its old habiliments, without even a change of shift. "We have great pleasure," says a contemporary, "in noticing an invention of Stephen Reed, Esq., of this town, which is very simple in its construction, and can be managed by the mere action of pulling a lever or a string. It is a staff," &c. &c. "*The guard*, therefore, cannot avoid seeing it; and in case of any accident, either by fire, the breaking of a spring, or other cause, can either stop the train, *or travel to the carriage, and ascertain the reason* of the signal. [How is he to do that? By scrambling over the carriages as usual in so many cases already? Well, since that is a recognised portion of the official duties of a guard, our intelligencer may as well suggest its adoption as that of the scarcely less objectionable staff or standing reed signal.] This signal has been seen by some of the railway authorities [no doubt of it] who readily gave their opinion in its favour, but *doubt its usefulness, for the ease with which mischievous passengers might unnecessarily stop the trains by its use.* [We should have thought so! Well we are always learning something new.] But this objection might easily be obviated, by the the imposition of a fine in such cases. [Might not nervous old women though, as well as mischievous youths, learn, like our cotemporary, how to bring out the reed? or might not playful children take a quiet opportunity of having a pull at the pulley now and then, for the fun of the thing alone, without either mischief or the fear of fine in their eye?] Mr. Reed has devoted much attention to this and other means of safety, where life is in danger." We scarcely think that justice can have been done to this gentleman's invention by thrusting forward this particular apparatus at this time of day, without at least showing how the guard is to be enabled, safely and legitimately, to "travel to the carriage." That is the grand question here as otherwise so often inadvertently hit upon. But at least let the travail give birth to some little means of preventing his brains from being dashed out by the way. Our pertinaciously suggested plan of a protected line of foot-boards or interior passage through the carriages, already adopted in America, *will* work its way into inevitable favour here too, we perceive, since its rough practice is being so constantly and unavoidably blundered on as a requisite adjunct to all sorts of signals, vocal and mechanical, issuing from the interiors of carriages.*——A self-acting signal of a hopeful kind in idea, at least, if not in adaptation, has been patented by Messrs. Cunningham and Carter, the inventors of the ingenious pneumatic railway, for giving notice, to every approaching train, of the exact distance the preceding one is in advance—and thus enabling the engine-driver to regulate his speed accordingly, and prevent accidents. They are to be placed at certain distances on the line, and are worked on by a mechanical arrangement, acted on by each locomotive engine in its passage, when the signal is immediately displayed by night or day, for directions to the next train. Such a signal, if at all practicable, would be far preferable to the movement of a false dial by hand at stations.——Another signal, some time since suggested, for giving due notice to express trains whether they may pass stations situated near curves, is shortly to be provided on the South-Eastern line. The proper signals in this case will be exhibited at 600 yards' distance from a station, by means of a crank and wire worked at the station itself, and the signals will be seen three-quarters of a mile farther. ——Mr. Black, late superintendent of fire-engines at Glasgow, suggests that the usual fog signals should be discontinued, and the firing of swivels substituted. The ringing of a series of alarm bells, too, along the line, from one point to another, he thinks should be practised in cases of danger from obstructions on the line. On the shoemaker's principle, now made obsolete by the advent of gutta percha, that there is "nothing like leather," Mr. Black recommends that no goods train should be without a small portable fire-engine, water cistern, &c., and certainly much valuable property might thus be saved from destruction. ——The number of passengers who travelled by rail during the last half-year, namely, 26,330,492, comprehends a railway ride for every man, woman, and child in England, Scotland, and Ireland, so that we may now be fairly called a nation of railway travellers, even though dividends do not 'look up' very hopefully at this precise moment. Yet it is calculated that within the next five years there will be upwards of 10,000 miles of railway open in Great Britain, which will give permanent employment, at good wages, to upwards of 140,000 persons, representing about 720,000 of gross population, taking five to a family. When it it is considered that there are about 4,000 miles of canals, and about 30,000 miles of turnpike-road in the kingdom, these 10,000 miles of railway in addition, will be an accession of vast importance to our internal communication.—The railway system is still progressing, too, in the United States. There will, probably, be more miles of railway opened this year than in any previous since these works were first commenced. Abut 300 miles will be brought into use this year in the State of New York; about 500 in New England; in New Jersey, 39; Ohio, 50—making in these States nearly 900 miles of railway. Besides this, there are at least 100 miles in progress, part of which will be completed in 1849.——The Saratoga and Whitehall Railway will be finished in October. The Hartford and Providence Company have contracted for 3,000 tons of railway iron, weighing 60 lbs. to the yard. The contract is made at 50 dollars a ton, and the iron is to delivered in New York next spring.

* We are really astonished to find in the recent pages of a scientific contemporary an exactly similar furbishing up of another old modification of the same, identical, and, for the present, useless idea, subject to the same series of objections, so long as we are without the prompt and ready means of enabling the guard to "travel to the carriages," though in all probability some such mode of signalling from carriages may be destined to be of practical utility, over and above the guards' free and constant circuit, *so soon as such means have been provided*, and not one moment sooner. "In fact," says our contemporary, and with obvious truth, "a comprehensive plan of railway signals is the great want of the day. A step in the right direction has been effected by Mr. Edwards, of Cambridge, who has invented an ingenious 'design for railway signal to be applied to passenger carriages, the object being to enable persons travelling to give immediate notice to the guard or driver of the engine, in case of danger, or other circumstances requiring attention.' It would be difficult to describe this invention without reference to the plan; but we may state that, by simple machinery, *at the command of every passenger*, a signal lamp for use by night, and a board by day, may be elevated above the roof of the carriage," &c. &c., of course with all the old apparatus of "spring" and "handle," for which see some old numbers of The Builder. "It thus appears," adds our informant, "that as far as the passenger is concerned, a means of making known his desire for communication with the guard or driver is acquired. *But this does not go far enough*: the person to be communicated with for all effective purposes is the driver, and *the difficulty* of calling his attention from his engine to what is going on behind him, *is yet to be surmounted*; for even supposing the guard to see the signal here described, he has no control over the engine, and till that be the case, we fear that Mr. Edwards's scheme, though good and sufficient so far as it goes, is yet defective and incapable of absolute utility, by reason of its just stepping short of the very link in the chain of communication, without which all the others are comparatively useless." Now, it is indeed remarkable that our contemporary himself does not perceive that he, too, has just stepped short of that very link, namely, in the circuit of the chain of communication by which the guard shall be enabled to "travel to the carriage," and judge for himself as to the necessity or non-necessity of a prompt announcement to the driver, which, if otherwise difficult or impracticable by instant signals, the guard may himself, as the next best, do by the same sort of means by which he was enabled to "travel to the carriage."

METROPOLITAN COMMISSION OF SEWERS.

A general court was held on Thursday the 21st inst., at the Court-house, Greek-street. The Hon. Frederick Byng in the chair. The salaries of the officers for the last quarter were ordered to be paid; and it was resolved, "That as the present commission was about to expire, all claims outstanding, both of the present and former commissions, should be sent in, that they might be examined and discharged."

On the production of the cheques for five annuitants, Mr. Hutton objected to the principle of including several amounts in one cheque, and was of opinion that a separate one should be prepared for each person, so that a regularity might be observed in their proceedings. This course was ultimately determined on.

On a sum of 500*l.* being named to a Mr. Peachy, a commissioner inquired what this sum was incurred for.—The clerk replied that it was the interest of 30,000*l.* borrowed by the late commissioners for the Kent and Surrey division, which sum was to be repaid by annual bonds of 1,000*l.*—Ordered.

The case of Thomas Mitchell, of Beresford-street, Newington, which has on two other occasions been noticed, was again brought before the court. On a former occasion, a fine of 50*l.* was ordered to be levied upon him, unless the obstruction caused by him to one of the sewers of this commission was removed to the satisfaction of their surveyor.

The surveyor now reported, that since that time Mr. Mitchell had certainly made some alteration to the building over the sewer, but that the obstruction was as great as ever. (A letter was read from Mr. Mitchell, in which he stated that he now considered that he had complied with the orders of the commissioners.)

Lord Ebrington was of opinion, that not having properly removed the obstruction, was a direct act of contumacy to the court, and that the conditional fine of 50*l.* should now be enforced. A few observations having been made on the subject by Mr. Leslie, Mr. Chadwick, and Mr. Hutton, it was finally resolved that the fine of 50*l.* is now confirmed, unless the obstruction is removed within one week; and in default, the surveyor be empowered at once to abate the nuisance.

Miscellanea.

The "New Patent Gas."—We have received a communication from Ireland, together with documents which clearly prove that what Mr. Stephen White calls his "new patent hydro-carbon gas" is an old "patent water-gas," which cost Mr. John Kelly, of Dublin, architect, 300*l.* to bring it to perfection, and for which he holds a patent for Ireland, useless in Dublin hitherto, on account of monopoly and prejudice on the part of others, and a press of professional engagements on his own part. In 1845 this new patent gas was favourably noticed in the Dublin newspapers, and also in the metropolitan and provincial press of this country. Indeed, that the gas was not new we were well aware, but we thought it possible for all that that Mr. White might have been the real originater of the invention. Mr. Kelly's article was thus described in the *Dublin Times* in 1845:—"New Patent Water Gas.—Having last evening visited the house of Mr. Kelly, Upper Gloucester-street, to test the merits of this important invention, we were much pleased at the simplicity of the apparatus, and the brilliancy of the light, which burns without the slightest smoke or smell. As an instance of its adaptation to gentlemen's mansions, shops, &c., in Mr. Kelly's house there can be seen a brilliant gas jet burning within 10 inches of an enriched cornice in two places, and although burning from seven until nine o'clock each night for the last ten, not the slightest stain can be perceived. The gas is made from a retort [the retorts were filled with small pieces of coke, to gain surface] set in the area, with a flue from the furnace to the kitchen chimney: it forms a bench similar to that of a hot hearth in a gentleman's kitchen, over which two cans are placed, one of which is filled with tar or resin oil, and the other with pure water. Each can is fitted with a small straight cock, and by the simultaneous dropping of the water and oil into syphons connected with the retorts, the gas is generated, and passes off by an inch gun barrel pipe into the gasometer, which is placed under the landing of the hall door, a distance of about 60 feet."

Method of Welding Iron, Steel, and Sheet-Iron.—In an earthen vessel melt borax, and add to it 1-10th of sal-ammoniac. When these ingredients are properly fused and mixed, pour them out upon an iron plate, and let them cool. There is thus obtained a glassy matter, to which is to be added an equal quantity of quick lime. The iron or steel which are to be soldered are first heated to redness; then this compound, first reduced to powder, is laid upon them—the composition melts and runs like sealing-wax; the pieces are then replaced in the fire, taking care to heat them at a temperature far below that usually employed in welding; they are then withdrawn and hammered, and the surfaces will be found to be thus perfectly united. The author asserts that this process, which may be applied to welding sheet-iron tubes, never fails.—*Rec. de la Soc. Polytech.*

The Timber Plundering in the New Forest.—The inquiry is far from approaching a close, and a party most seriously implicated has absconded. The officers have found timber "irregularly" obtained at the Northern yards and at Jersey: if the inquiry is fully carried out, in fact, it may be said to be at present only in its commencement.

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